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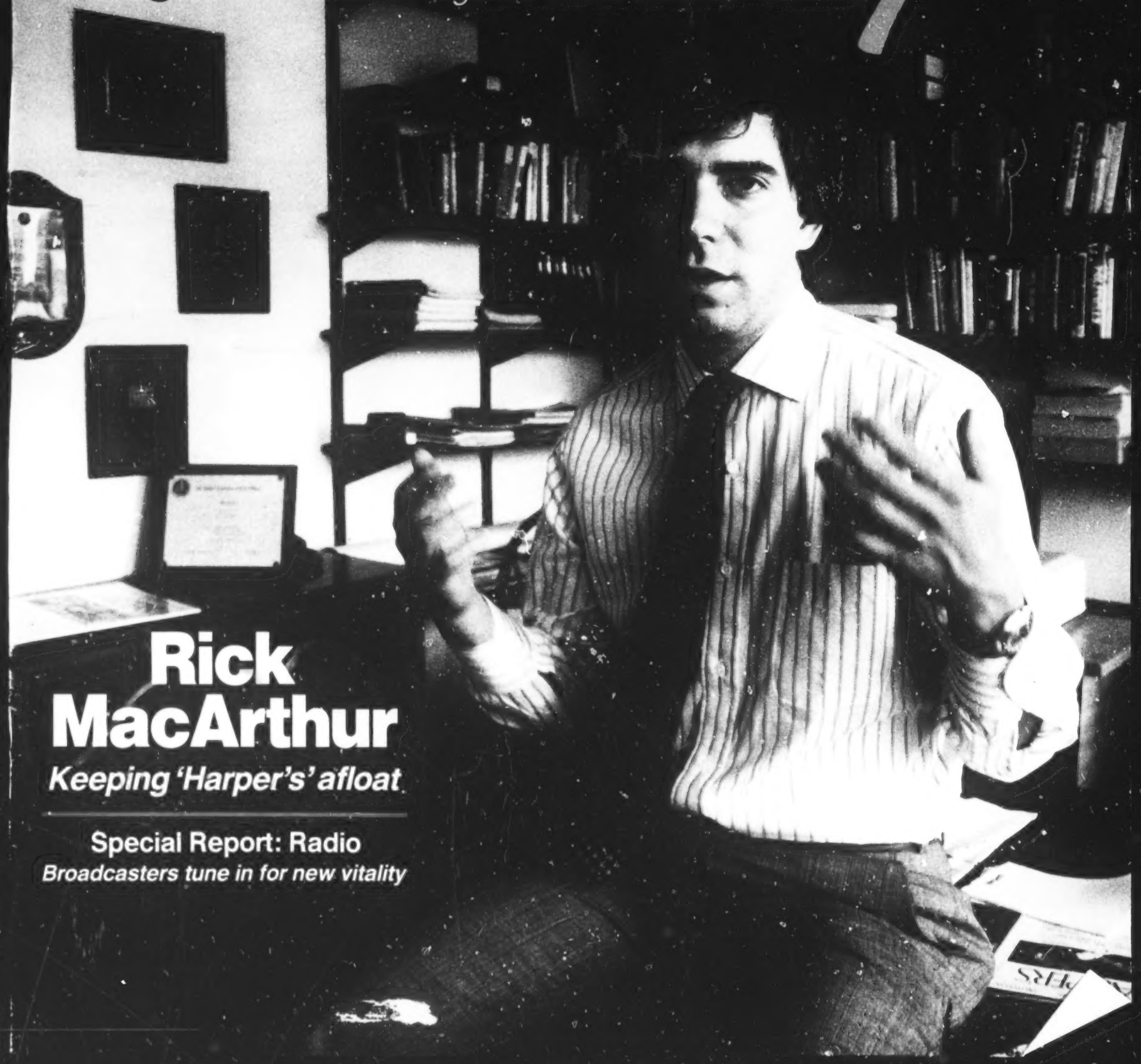
Advertising Age Thursday

Crain's Magazine of the Creative Process



Rick MacArthur

Keeping 'Harper's' afloat

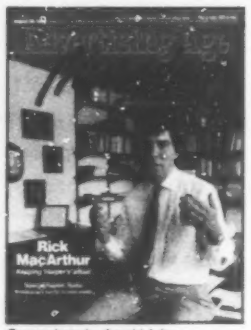
Special Report: Radio

Broadcasters tune in for new vitality

Thursday

Making it with MacArthur

Rick MacArthur, president and publisher of *Harper's*, has carried the concept of on-the-job training into a new realm. Two years ago, at 26, he interrupted his career as a newspaperman to take over the venerable journal of American letters, which hadn't netted a dime for nearly 10 years. Operating on instinct but not on salary, he made some daring changes. And sure enough, the 135-year-old *Harper's* already has begun to rally. *See Page 4.*



Cover photo by Arnold Adler

Pimm

For years, Pimm's Cup has been the quintessential "gentleman's drink," the kind that requires ownership of at least one polo pony and a wellbred, jutting jaw that is perfect for telling scandalous tales about who made off with who's trust fund (and wife). These days, though, Pimm's Cup—a gin-based concoction with a hint of citrus and herbs—is trotting past the manor gates into a more democratic sampling of homes. *See Page 6.*

Beep

The answering machine, with its limitless (well, 30-second) potential for fun, has become the adult toy of the '80s. *See Page 36.*

Special Report—Radio

The radio industry has tuned in to new formats and programing in order to compete with the wealth of new entertainment options that increasingly are becoming available for consumers as well as for advertisers. *Starting on Page 15.*

Representing a contingent of more than 60 from Finland at the Advertising Age Creative Workshop are: (l. to r.) Ulla Sarviala, Interplan Oy; Seppo Pasanen, Creator Advertising Ltd.; Mauri Mattsson, APU Magazine Group; Henrik Rasmussen, APU Magazine Group, and Carita Koivunen, Interplan Oy.

To Burger King, all's fair in love and marketing

By Gary Levin

Burger King Corp. chairman J. Jeffrey Campbell believes his biggest task at the No. 2 fast-food chain is ensuring "a future free of mortal risk: We're trying not to be the Howard Johnson's of 1990." He was referring to the imminent purchase of that once-dominant chain by Washington-based Marriott Corp.

Speaking at the 28th annual Advertising Age Creative Workshop in New York, the army veteran and student of British history peppered his "Life and Death in the Advertising Battlefield" address with military metaphors, perhaps an appropriate choice for what the executive termed "the battle of the burgers."

Mr. Campbell said agencies and clients too often forget that "advertising, like warfare, is supposed to accomplish something" and stressed that corporate goals of return on investment "have not been suspended for advertising." (Burger King spends $160 million a year in advertising; the company's pretax profits have jumped from $60 million to $220 million in the past four years.)

The first question asked at Miami-based Burger King, he said, is the "three McDonald's question: You have 30 seconds on tv to explain to the average consumer why he should pass three McDonald's, two Wendy's, one Carl's Jr.'s and a Jack in the Box, all of whom have 90 seconds to respond." (His answer: Taste.)

Fight like guerrillas

Unable to compete with Oak Brook, Ill.-based McDonald's on its own sentimental terms, "we had to fight like guerrillas," Mr. Campbell said.

"Rather than having the tears flow, we wanted the saliva to flow after every execution," he added, citing Burger King's transition in the 1980s from an unsuccessful "Make it special" life-style approach to stronger "Aren't you hungry?" food appeal.

In his keynote speech to nearly 1,000 attendees, the youthful executive said he's found military history books far more useful than so-called "how-to" manuals in managing his company and competing with the McDonald's monolith. Execution of the burger battle requires elements of surprise, concentration and maneuvering, he said, while conceding that Burger King has not always followed that advice.

Dismisses copy testing

He cited two recent examples of failed efforts by BK agency J. Walter Thompson USA, New York: The "McDonald's sent you" spot, featuring the "McDonald family" in disguise, and a variation on the "Have it your way" theme stressing the burger's made-to-order appeal.

In the former spot, "we were talking to ourselves, not consumers," Mr. Campbell said, while the latter work was simply "off strategy." Still, he dismissed copy testing as "hokum," ruffling the feathers of some research-minded people in the audience.

In part due to over-all softness in the restaurant industry, he said the "reformulated" Whopper has generated slight incremental business, with Whopper unit sales up only 1% a week.

Mr. Campbell said Burger King may increase its promotional activity to combat the slowdown, though the company won't do so as a "knee-jerk" response to McDonald's. "We're concentrating more on where we want to be than on shooting at them," he said. "We don't consider we're on top enough."

Frogging it

Another Workshop session demonstrated that the fascination with what's "Down Under" may even include a seemingly innocuous ice cream bar.

That's what Good Humor Corp., Fairfield, N.J., found out when it sought to bring to this country Fat Frog, an Australian product made by another unit of parent Unilever.

Good Humor, a division of Thomas J. Lipton Co., latched onto the novelty, a green mint ice cream bar with M&M-like eyes and a partial chocolate coating.

Launched Down Under in September, 1983, by Streets, which like Good Humor is one of 22 Unilever ice cream makers, the product's success spurred the U.S. company to bring the bar into

(Continued on Page 39)

Presstime

Stroh cuts off B&B

Detroit—Stroh Brewery Co. has dropped Benton & Bowles, New York, from its agency roster because of a brand conflict resulting from the proposed merger of B&B with D'Arcy MacManus Masius. B&B handled the $4 million Schlitz malt liquor account, while DMM in St. Louis has Anheuser-Busch's Budweiser account. BBDO, which handles Stroh's Old Milwaukee line, and MCA Advertising, Westport, Conn., which handles the Erlanger, Schaefer, Schlitz and Signature lines, already have made creative presentations for the Schlitz malt liquor assignment. Separately, Stroh within the next 60 days will introduce an imported beer product, Christopher Lole, vp-corporate planning and development, disclosed on Aug. 27 at Advertising Age's Creative Workshop. Mr. Lole also indicated the company will move its Signature superpremium entry into national distribution by mid-'86.

O&M stars for Columbia

Burbank, Cal.—Columbia Pictures will consolidate its ad account at Ogilvy & Mather, giving O&M the $8 million-to-$9 million portion of the account in New York, Los Angeles and San Diego that had been at Diener/Hauser/Bates Co. A D/H/B spokesman, who confirmed the move will occur Oct. 1, says his agency would retain the ad assignment for Florida, where it has an office and O&M does not. O&M already handles Columbia's national advertising. Separately, Columbia responded to a published story that John Balson, formerly chief operating officer of D'Arcy MacManus Masius/North America, would be moving to the West Coast as Columbia's president of marketing. The studio said "we just don't comment on rumor or speculation."

ABC follows CBS to 15s

New York—ABC-TV, as expected, says it will begin accepting 15-second commercial units in sports, news and business briefs. The network follows the lead of CBS, which disclosed a similar plan two weeks ago (AA, Aug. 12, *et seq.*). There was no word as to when the new plan would go into effect, though sources said ABC would begin selling stand-alones this fall.

O&M wins sex bias suit

New York—Ogilvy & Mather has won the much publicized, sex discrimination suit against it (AA, Oct. 17, '83, *et seq.*). Federal district court judge Lee Gagliardi this week dismissed the class action salary discrimination claim against the agency, as well as the individual salary discrimination claim by ex-employe Jane Zukoffsky. The judge last year had dismissed the individual claims (AA, Nov. 19) but had asked for more information in order to decide on the class action part of the suit.

Smith spot pulled

New York—The Council for Cable Information has withdrawn a 30-second network radio spot featuring Samantha Smith, who died Aug. 26 in a plane crash. The 13-year-old had gained prominence several years ago after she wrote a letter to

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ABP MPA RED TAG ABC

New formats gain frequency on am band

By Janice Steinberg

Although contemporary hit radio and its sidekicks, adult contemporary and album-oriented rock, continue to make news for the money-making fm side of the radio dial, most of the innovations in radio formats are being broadcast on the struggling am band.

San Francisco's KFRC has made some of the biggest ripples in the industry with midday game shows that recall the golden age of radio, or, according to some critics, '50s tv *(see Page 20)*. It's not the only am frequency taking risks to woo the 70% of radio listeners who seem to have settled on the fm dial.

In Thousand Oaks, Cal., Bob Zeidel's KMDY puts out 20 hours a day of comedy. The suburban am station didn't originate the idea. WJOK in Gaithersburg, Md., tried comedy and failed a few years ago. But Mr. Zeidel says he's found the winning formula: Two and three-minute cuts that conform to the short-spurt way people listen to radio.

This spring, year-old KMDY became the first station in its primary coverage area, East Ventura County, to show up in the ratings book. "We're a 500-watter and we've made this radio station work in the ratings over stations that have tried for a long time but never, never could do it," Mr. Zeidel says.

Bill Osewalt sounds happy as well. He did $2.1 million of research to prove am stations can make money in children's programing. Now he's sold his Marina del Rey, Cal.-based Children's Radio Network to am stations in 13 cities, starting with Jacksonville, Fla.; Grand Rapids, Mich., and Phoenix, Ariz. "It's one of the fastest rising syndications in the history of radio," says Doug Smith, manager of the Phoenix station, KSUN.

Janice Steinberg is a free lance writer and former radio station promotion director.

Children make for cute stories, like the one Mr. Smith tells about the tot who called and asked the morning disc jockey to play the "Brush Your Teeth" song. "He'd been waiting two hours," Mr. Smith says. "Now his toothpaste was hard on the brush."

Children's Radio Network is betting children and their 18 to 49-year-old parents will be a valuable market for advertisers as well. In Jacksonville, where the kid stuff has been on WEXI since December, Mr. Osewalt says, "We have audience in every Zip code for every single minute of every single day of the week."

Between June 3 and Aug. 1, he adds, WEXI—formerly a big band station with an uncertain future—picked up 170 new advertisers.

RKO station KHJ-AM recently introduced "car radio," which gives its Los Angeles audience traffic reports every 10 minutes, 24 hours a day, plus tips on beach weather and weekend events, as well as information about cars and driving.

Kent Burkhart, chairman of Atlanta-based industry consultants Burkhart/Abrams/Michaels/Douglas & Associates, sees a want ad station in am's future. He predicts an all-sports am format as well. "There will be two-way discussion between an audience and a moderator regarding [New York Mets outfielder] Darryl Strawberry's 24th home run last night."

Only one new am format is attempting to beat fm at music programing. Bonneville International Corp.-owned KOIT-AM in San Francisco recently took new call letters, KXLR, and changed its format to "trend formation," a combination of light jazz, new age music (*a la* the Windham Hill label) and a deliberately nonsensational approach to news.

"We run one trend formation interview an hour, for five, six, seven miuntes," KXLR executive Norm Woodruff says. "We say hello to somebody, chat with them, get their viewpoint on a subject, and then say thanks loads. Then we play back the whole thing, allowing the audience to decide what, if any of it, matters to them—instead of somebody in the newsroom deciding which 20 seconds are the most important."

KXLR comes out of radio guru Frank Magid's study on the future of am, says Jack Adamson, senior vp of Salt Lake City-based Bonneville. "The study said, don't relegate yourself to just the normal format of the golden oldies or the big band [sound] as far as music is concerned, the news and talk like the rest of them—or am will slowly fade into the night."

But Jhan Hiber, consultant and research editor for Los Angeles-based Radio & Records magazine, says, "People who proclaim the death of am aren't looking at a lot of stations who are making a lot of money and laughing all the way to the bank about the so-called death of their medium." Mr. Hiber mentions Minneapolis, St. Louis, Dayton, O., and Louisville, Ky., where the top-rated stations are on the am band.

Nevertheless, most of the big bucks are found in fm. WHTZ "knocked New York over," says Arbitron Ratings Co. pr specialist Alison Conte, when the Se-

Hit radio still tops the charts

Percentage of listening based on one-quarter hour average in 173 Arbitron markets (2,865 stations)

Format	Number of stations	1984	1985	Percentage change
Contemporary hit radio	373	16.87%	17.74%	+ 5.2%
Adult contemp./oldies	470	13.62	15.91	+16.8
Country	501	11.79	11.19	– 5.1
Album-oriented rock	179	10.76	10.71	– 0.5
Easy listening	194	11.02	10.05	– 8.8
News/talk	126	8.61	8.77	+ 1.9
Black/urban	206	10.12	8.53	–15.7
Middle of the road/variety	249	7.31	7.02	– 4.0
Nostalgia/big band	167	4.13	4.02	– 2.7
Spanish	64	2.56	2.31	– 9.8
Religion/gospel	227	1.76	2.00	+13.6
Classical	36	1.20	1.37	+14.2
Others	72	0.24	0.38	+58.3

Source: "American Radio," spring, 1985

Madonna averages one play per hour on chrs.

The Scorpions are strictly aor material.

Pop-gospel stars have propelled religious radio.

Tuning

(Continued from Page 16)

of those companies—including such heavy hitters as Ford Motor Co., which dropped spending by 38.2% between 1983 and 1984, Chrysler Corp. (14.6%) and Adolph Coors Co. (14.8%)—decreased their expenditures on radio.

Although these are profitable times, not all stations are sharing in the success. In the top 100 markets, an estimated 15 to 20 established stations currently are dark. Although this represents less than 1% of total U.S. outlets, according to Mr. Duncan, there is a good chance that more, especially on the am band, eventually will have to suspend broadcasting temporarily or go off the air permanently.

While it is considerable, the success at ABC Radio is not unqualified. Like its competitors in the network radio business, ABC has not been able to turn the corner on long-form programing. Certainly ABC specials such as July's Live Aid concert, the weekly "American Top 40 with Casey Kasem" and various sports events have delivered impressive audiences. But Talkradio—the 108-hour satellite package of talk shows originating primarily from New York and the West Coast—has not yet been a money maker.

"In today's market, radio stations are looking for any edge they can get," says Randy Bongarten, president of New York-based NBC Radio. "The networks are just beginning to understand what stations need and what they can do to help."

Indeed, if radio is used primarily as a familiar medium of immediacy and local personality, the attempt to sell nationally oriented talk shows—especially in markets where big-name guests already appear on local programs—is a difficult task. Cognizant of this problem, Mr. McLaughlin admits, "My personal challenge is great growth in 1986 for Talkradio."

But if the case of Chicago am station WIND is any indication, Talkradio faces formidable hurdles. In the past several years, this Westinghouse Electric Corp. outlet has discharged most of its own talk show hosts and substituted ABC gabbers such as longtime California "talk jockey" Michael Jackson and psychologist/counselor Dr. Toni Grant from Los Angeles.

While the personnel cuts have improved the station's bottom line, the "interlopers" have generated little enthusiasm. Moreover, without its local flavor, once-influential WIND has ceased to be a force in Chicago radio, dropping from No. 5 several years ago to No. 16 in recent Arbitron Ratings Co. results.

Despite the confidence of experts predicting it will not hap-

Music videos

"I think music videos have been good for radio. It's refreshed radio as well as broken acts that might not have had a chance otherwise. They're not really a threat to radio—people use the two media differently. Music video tv is video wallpaper. We try to give listeners a reason to have the radio on."

—Frank Cody
director of programing, NBC Radio Entertainment and the Source

Am stereo

"Am stereo is an evolutionary process. I don't think anyone thought it would be otherwise. It's not unlike the cable tv situation. In both cases, everybody's hopes were tied to the simple fact that you could do it. Part of the reason everybody's writing obits is that the hype was so big—just like cable."

—Stephen Soule
vp-general manager, NBC Radio Network and Talknet

Creativity

"As far as the listener goes, I think radio is going through one of its most creative periods ever. We're offering more options for more people. The success of that is borne out by the increasing number of viable stations out there. In the 1970s, we were in an almost regressive period of formats; stations all sounded the same. Today there's more risk-taking, which has in turn created more opportunities for network radio."

—Randal Bongarten
president, NBC Radio

caucus, N.J.-based station went to contemporary hit radio and a snappy, irreverent morning drive show (the Zoo) two years ago; WHTZ shot from the ratings basement to the top spot in the New York market.

Some 373 stations in the 173 Arbitron-rated markets now play chr, including WMMS-FM, Cleveland's former aor leader. "Aor was becoming narrowcast," WMMS operations manager John Gorman says. "It was avoiding black music, it was avoiding r&b, it was avoiding straight pop. We felt WMMS would be a lot more successful by playing a wide variety of music." He reports that since WMMS initiated the change in the fall of 1983, it's been No. 1, with a 10-plus share seven books in a row.

That kind of success characterizes chr stations across the county, despite some markets where too many fms jumped on the chr bandwagon and canceled each other out.

Mr. Hiber nominates urban contemporary as the music format to watch. "In Miami and other markets, [we've seen] situations where new urban contemporary stations have come on, been able to project a hip image, play the dance music and be successful with it," he says.

Mr. Burkhart sees two music trends developing: "Mood stations" playing ultra-soft adult contemporary, with an emphasis on oldies, for women 35 to 49 years old, and a soft, oldie album rock geared toward men 25 to 49.

Scottsdale, Ariz.-based industry consultant John Sebastian's yuppie male-aimed eclectic oriented rock (eor) has been picked up by only two stations.

Then there are those stations, and groups of stations, that go their own way regardless of the trends.

Classical radio, for instance, is enjoying better profits than ever, says Peter Besheer, New York-based exec vp of the 13-station Concert Music Network. Once handicapped by a cost-per-thousand approach to spot sales, the nation's 38 classical stations now employ psychographics to sell Mercedes-Benz dealers and other upscale advertisers on their audience.

"Today a well-run classical station can do very well on the profit side, extremely well," Mr. Besheer says, reporting that 43% of one station's gross billing is pretax profit. "I think that's pretty respectable."

Religious stations also are thriving and partly by moving away from some of the Christian radio stereotypes. "It's not necessarily the Gospel music or the Bible-beating disc jockey," says Wendell Wood, director-media and public affairs for the National Radio Broadcasters Assn., Washington. "They have a lot more intellectual topics and contemporary Christian music, like Amy Grant."

Am stations in 13 U.S. cities are playing the Children's Radio Network.

Christian radio has broadened geographically as well. "We used to say this was a Bible Belt phenomenon, but now it follows more the population centers of the country—New York, Los Angeles, Chicago," says Ben Armstrong, executive director of the National Religious Broadcasters, Washington. The NRB directory has picked up more than 155 new listings since January, 1984, Mr. Armstrong says, bringing the total stations broadcasting some religious programing to 1,144.

Woodstock, N.Y., and Santa Fe, N.M., are the artsy, fertile ground where two unorthodox fm stations have made names for themselves—and healthy profits. Woodstock's WDST combines contemporary, country, jazz and classical music, using disc jockeys who are musicians in each of those fields.

KLSK in Santa Fe pays the bills—"You bet we're paying the bills!" declares owner-program director Bill Sims—by playing 10 to 20-minute sets of classical, jazz and light rock back to back.

Mr. Sims credits KLSK's success to careful screening and rotating of everything played on the station, a coherent theme—melodic music—that ties the several genres together and the arts-oriented Santa Fe community, which boasts more art galleries per capita than anyplace in the country. Yet he and WDST's Jerry Gillman think a broader approach can work in major markets as well.

Radio appears to be heading toward more and more specific formating, however. Although a few voices in the wilderness cry out against increased narrowcasting, most in the industry believe radio's ability to deliver specific audiences remains one of its greatest strengths.

"The fragmentation of radio during the past 20 years is not going to quit," NRBA's Ms. Wood says. You really want to target that individual listener."

For Bill Livick, senior vp of Birch Research, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., fragmentation means rich diversity. He looks forward to "a renaissance of the jazz-type station," in a future when ratings reflect parity among stations. "I think the demographic skews will be wildly different. A two share is what I call it," he says.

While that may sound idyllic to radio listeners—and to advertisers looking for well-defined markets—the industry may not share Mr. Livick's enthusiasm for parity.

And despite the dozens of names coined for formats and the detailed way broadcasters describe the differences, radio's tougher critics may continue to find that too many stations sound alike.

Then again, who knows what impact the experimenters will have on radio. As several industry veterans say, both all-news and rock radio started very small.

What's in fm's future?

With the spring Arbitron Ratings Co. reports now analyzed, what do the experts say about today's big fm formats?

Contemporary hit radio still "is going stronger than bear's breath" in the spring ratings, says Jhan Hiber of *Radio & Records* magazine. He also sees a comeback for album-oriented rock reflected in the spring ratings and in a repositioning of some aor stations to go after yuppie men.

"Chr and aor are two very hot properties right now," agrees Bill Livick, senior vp of Birch Research, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Birch measures 130 markets, 85 on a monthly basis, using phone surveys instead of Arbitron-style diaries.

The spring analysis from James Duncan's Kalamazoo, Mich.-based "American Radio" offers format-by-format data on the 2,865 stations in Arbitron's 173 rated markets. Chr looks strong in Mr. Duncan's numbers. Still the top format nationally, it's carried by 5.2% more stations than in spring, 1984.

Adult contemporary also appears strong, but how strong isn't clear. Mr. Duncan looks at adult contemporary and oldies as a single category because they appeal to similar demographics, and he attributes the strong adult contemporary showing to am stations that have switched to oldies formats. Mr. Hiber, looking at the same Arbitron figures for 10 of the top 100 markets, sees "fairly consistent signs of softness" in adult contemporary, especially in the 25-to-54 age group.

Where there's little disagreement is on the poor showing of country stations. Kent Burkhart, chairman of Atlanta consultants Burkhart/Abrams/Michaels/Douglas & Associates, blames a music lull. "Country music needs a shot in the arm with big new artists coming along to bring sort of an urban cowboy revitalization," he says.

"[In the last two years] the country music people have not been able to break out a major artist to be nationally known by the listeners to other forms of radio, people who would listen to country radio to hear a Dolly Parton or a Kenny Rogers or a new star in the making." —*J.S.*

pen, there remains the persistent potential for emerging technology to lure listeners to other media. If, as the mavens suggested, that threat exists only as far as new media can serve audiences as radio does, there are indications that this is happening.

Cable News Network and other news services already have cut into the older audience for all-news radio, according to Ms. Ekdom. Morning news-and-features tv programs such as NBC-TV's "Today" and ABC-TV's "Good Morning America" are structured to be heard as much as viewed.

Still another video inroad into radio's traditional role lies in the shifting directions of tv advertising. Independent and cable tv stations, as well as the networks and their affiliates, are discovering the profitability of target marketing. Such specialized salesmanship has been a crucial part of the success of contemporary radio. Questions arise, therefore, about the impact on radio should advertising agencies and tv develop sophisticated, financially competitive targeting strategies for clients.

Some suggest this can never happen until tv also can be formatted. Yet, local tv stations already are building program blocks with specific audiences in mind. At the networks, daytime soap operas continue to deliver adult women. Despite only average ratings, "Cheers" and "Hill Street Blues" have continued on NBC-TV's prime-time schedule in great part because they deliver attractive target audiences —women 18 to 34 in the case of the former, and upscale adults in the latter.

In radio these may be the best of times. Yet, as broadcasting approaches its 65th birthday this November, the history of the medium suggests that changes in American life can have unexpected impacts on radio. In a time of ever-emerging electronic gadgetry with innovative uses, radio must temper its success with a cautiousness learned from history and from an understanding of the society it serves.

Narrowcasting

"The radio business has never been in better shape. Radio has found its niche through narrowly defined formats that appeal to specific demographics. Radio is in everybody's lives to a greater degree."

—*Norman Pattiz*
president-chairman,
Westwood One

Network ratings

"The [RKO ratings scandal] brought up a lot of important questions, ones that we need to address. But out of all adversity comes some good. The network ratings system won't look the same in five years. There's no doubt that we have a lot of tightening up to do. We deal in a business of trust, and that has to be re-established; some people did things they never should have done. But three guys don't kill a medium."

—*Nick Verbitsky*
president, United Stations

Future of am

"Am is doing something it should have done for a long while, and that's focus attention on the older demographics. As they get that message across—that we all don't have to be centering in on that 18-to-34-year-old market—business should be better for am stations."

—*Richard Brescia*
senior vp,
CBS Radio Networks

Am stereo

"Am stereo is going to be a very important adjunct for radio. Detroit will install more am stereo receivers in cars, and when the receivers are there, more stations will transmit via stereo. For the driver, stereo won't improve the sound they get from their am car radio, but they'll feel better listening to am radio."

—*Jack Clements*
president,
Mutual Broadcasting System

People Patterns — Households changing constantly

By PETER FRANCESE

Household and family statistics are like wedding photographs—everything changes soon after the picture is taken. There may be 25 million married couples now, but they are by no means the same 25 million we had 10 years ago.

Some people stay married for life, while others divorce after weeks or months. The picture of human relationships is really a motion picture, but we look at it one frame at a time.

Beginning in 1968, the Institute for Survey Research at the University of Michigan decided to develop the motion picture of household change by interviewing a fixed sample of people every year for more than a decade to determine the stability of various household types. Researchers at the Rand Corp., looking at 10,000 of the interviews over 13 years, found how unstable most American households are.

The longest duration type was, as we would have expected, husband-wife families with children. But even they last a median of only 6.9 years. That means half of all married couples with children stay together less than seven years. No wonder there are so many single-parent families. But single parents apparently don't stay that way very long either. After 3.9 years, half of them have remarried or changed their living arrangements.

People who live alone also do so for only a relatively short time. Their median length of aloneness is only 4.8 years. It appears that even though the total number of single persons has been growing very fast (84% increase since 1970), most people either get married or move in with someone else within five years.

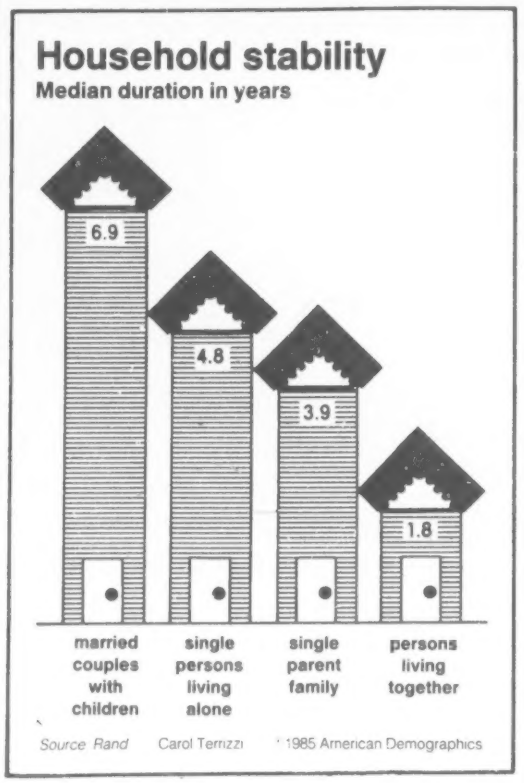
The least stable household is the one most talked about—cohabitation. People who live together without being married usually do so for less than two years (median duration: 1.8 years). After this brief period, most of these relationships, which are often really trial marriages, either break up or the couple gets married.

The median duration of a childless marriage is only 4.2 years. Half of all married couples either have had a child or split up within that time. If they have children, we can presume that new state will last, on average, about seven years.

The time period of this study was 1968 to 1980, a period of great social upheaval during which millions of young baby boomers tried and often rejected various household life styles. There is some evidence (such as the diminished divorce rates) that we are returning to a time of greater household stability.

Peter Francese is publisher of American Demographics.

As we return toward a more middle-age society, marriages may last longer, particularly those of older people without children. But is it really likely that the less stable states of singleness or single-parenthood will last any longer than they do now? I don't think so, because such household types are considerably less well off economically than married couples, and nobody likes to be poor.



Finally, it's important to remember that household transition studies do not tabulate the parttime situations where, for example, couples come together for weekends but otherwise live separately.

Speaking of family relationships, few letters have touched me as deeply as the one I received from a mother soon after my Father's Day column appeared. That column described the phenomenon of the 7.3 million men in their 20s who still live at home with their parents. She writes:

"We have a 24-year-old son living at home, and the reasons for this seem very obvious to me. He works for an aircraft corporation and earns more money than his father. He pays $40 a week room and board, has a sizable investment program, drives an expensive vehicle and owns a boat. He also camps and owns all the necessary equipment along with a growing gun collection. The refrigerator is always filled with food that he doesn't have to shop for. His clothes are laundered, altered and mended at no additional charge.

"His girlfriend has her own apartment, where he is welcome to spend the weekends. She is an excellent cook and does all the shopping and food preparations for camping trips. Coed, of course!

"My 50-year-old husband states that if this life style had been available to him in the 1950s, he would still be single today! Sincerely, Mom."

Dear Mom: Letters like yours never let me forget that behind every cold table of statistics there are warm human beings like you. You didn't ask for any advice, so I won't give any, but I have a question: Why do you allow him to get away with what is obviously an incredibly one-sided arrangement? The market value of the shelter and housekeeping services you are providing is at least five times what you are charging. Surely you have heard of the struggle for equal pay for equal work.

But I suspect I know at least part of the answer to my question, Mom. You are the last generation of traditional stay-at-home mothers who mend clothes, buy all the groceries and probably bake apple pies.

The generation of women after you is not into apple pie. By and large, they didn't become moms like you—they went into the paid labor force. Because they have paying jobs, they don't need your son to support them.

His girlfriend, like many employed young women, has the choice you never had between marriage and part-time, no-strings, cohabitation. She may have difficulty, however, making the transition to wife of your son and mother of your grandchildren.

The tragedy here is that by continuing to mother your grown son, you have ill-prepared him for any future life with a working wife who may expect him to share the household chores equally.

I guess it will take the next generation of mothers to bring up their sons to think of women as something more than providers of low-cost domestic services.

Unfortunately, judging from the last sentence of your letter, it's too late for your husband.

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Parting Shot — U.S. should bow to Japanese custom

By RANCE CRAIN

The Japanese have given us a lot of great innovations during the past 40 years, ranging from cameras to sushi, but their greatest offering by far has just come to light. I refer to their recently publicized custom whereby the head of a corporation apologizes and resigns following a major disaster.

After the recent crash of a Japan Air Lines jumbo jet with the tragic loss of 520 lives, JAL president Yasumoto Takegi submitted his resignation to the Prime Minister, despite no showing—thus far—of any corporate or personal wrongdoing.

According to *USA Today*, a JAL spokesman explained, "In Japan when something goes wrong, the head man takes responsibility. Resigning is a way to wipe the slate clean." In short, resignation is the modern day version of *hara-kiri*.

The contrast between typical Japanese and American corporate responses is striking. An editorial in last week's edition of *Business Insurance*, a sister publication of Advertising Age, pointed out, "In Japan the president of Japan Air Lines stood, with head bowed, to greet in sympathy and apology the arriving relatives of those killed in the JAL crash. In the United States, corporate executives too often remain invisible and silent in the face of massive human tragedy, or at best are represented by spokesmen who merely utter denials or 'no comment.' If U.S. corporate executives instead were to immediately express what should be genuine regret for catastrophes involving their companies and showed sympathy and concern for the victims, they could avert victims' tendency to seek revenge."

Of course, ritual resignation is just one facet of the entire Japanese economic and cultural system that differs vastly from our own. Another intriguing difference: Relatives of the victims probably will not sue JAL. Instead, they'll negotiate settlements that, in all likelihood, will be considerably smaller than those their American counterparts would receive under similar circumstances.

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Despite the differences in legal practices between Japan and the U.S., I think the Japanese custom of resigning has a lot to recommend it.

For starters, General Dynamics Corp. admitted last spring that it overbilled the Pentagon millions of dollars in overhead charges. When the Defense Department briefly considered barring two top officers of the company—chairman David Lewis and chief financial officer Gordon E. MacDonald—from work on government contracts, the company told the *New York Times*, "As far as we are concerned, there are no grounds whatever for suspension or debarment of either the company or of its senior executives." I can think of a few.

And finally, consider Union Carbide Co. After the tragic chemical leak at Carbide's plant in Bhopal, India, last December in which 2,000 people died and many more were injured, Union Carbide chairman Warren Anderson—reputed to be a compassionate and responsible man—went to India to show his genuine concern for the disaster. His effort was admirable, but Union Carbide's problems continue, as evidenced by two more chemical leaks in West Virginia, with still unknown consequences for its victims.

When asked if he would resign, Mr. Anderson replied that resigning would be cowardly. I disagree. Union Carbide's credibility is severely shaken, and the American public will continue to doubt Carbide's ability to safely handle toxic chemicals until a new chief executive takes charge.

As *Business Insurance* concluded, "The substantial cultural differences between America and Japan admittedly dictate the contrasting response of those struck by tragedy." But that needn't preclude Americans from adopting one of Japan's best and most useful customs.